

Parshat Beshalach  
Probing the Heart and the Soul – Hasidic Insights into the Parsha  
Sefat Emet and Mei haShiloach  
Melton Geshar at JCC, February 1, 2012  
JSI at Beth Torah, February 2, 2012

Sefat Emet volume two, page 83, year תרסא, opening phrase זא ישיר

- “Instruments to witness to the Creator” – this is what we have talked about in the past two parshiot: Finding the existent truth in places that seem so dark and ungodly, and uncovering the ‘letters’ of creation left from the primordial moments when God originally fashioned the world.
- “Renewal” – the song should never become old in our mouths; it should always be as if we are singing it for the first time. We must continually do the work to discover new spiritual insights; to be radically amazed anew every single day. Yesterday’s insights and inspiration and faith don’t work today, and today’s don’t work tomorrow. This is perhaps similar or at least related to the idea we saw last week in Rebbe Nachman from the very beginning of Sichot haRan.
- “Have been implanted” – it is natural and normal to search for attachment to God. Although it may be hard work, it is of our very essence.
- “We were not able to call it forth” – The bondage caused us to forget our natural God connection. Spirituality was overshadowed by physicality. This is just as it says in Shmot 6:9 “But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to Moses, for their spirits were crushed by cruel bondage”. Egypt represents all bondage to physicality and we very often suffer its affects. The physical overshadows the spiritual and God consciousness is lost. We lose connection to that which is implanted deep within us. We must always struggle to maintain the primacy of God consciousness, always be witnesses to God here on earth. If we do not do so, we are allowing ourselves to be enslaved by the physical world, and are losing touch we who we really are and were meant to be and to do.
- “Our soul has escaped like a bird” – The bird naturally flies upward towards the sky and so our souls normally and naturally fly upward towards God ... except when something is holding them back.
- “Our desire was imprisoned” - As slaves, we could not even experience our natural longing for God. We could not dream and we could not hope and we could not experience anything beyond the tip or our noses. The slave loses his ability to imagine anything beyond the reality in which he lives. The slave mentality is about coming to see yourself as a slave and nothing more, within any yearning for something more, something beyond. The soul and not only the body become enslaved and then you stop dreaming. The slave learns to make do with his state and becomes used to it, satisfied. He maintains equilibrium and no longer looks forward to anything better. That is how he maintains his sanity ... but it is truly tragic. The free man yearns for more. More fulfillment which means more God, a closer connection, more insight. Freedom allows the soul to yearn. The freeman is aware that he could and should be closer to God. He is pained by God’s perceived distance. And he tries to move closer. Slavery is about being static and accepting your lot. Freedom is about movement and dynamism and wanting more, a deeper godliness in your life. So the slave may be OK with his lot and the freeman may

be dissatisfied and frustrated ... but it is still better to be free than to be a slave. And we all ought to be free and to connect to real spiritual cravings and desires. Shabat - A time of freedom from physicality when we can connect to the soul's natural craving for God. Now this may engender melancholy but that is not bad. It is good, being as it is a recognition of our spiritual nature and potential. This may be the explanation of the pensive mood of seudah shlishit.

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"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel." After the Exodus they became instruments to witness to the Creator. . . . The Midrash quotes the verse: "He brought me up out of the gruesome pit . . . and He placed in my mouth a new song of praise to our God" (Ps. 40:3-4).

The meaning of "new" is that it forever carries this power of renewal. It can never be forgotten by the souls of Israel. It was hardly for naught that they insisted this song be sung each day. Israel's faith [at the sea] was that this saving act would last for all generations. Thus Scripture says: "He is become my salvation" (Ex. 15:2), which the rabbis read as, "He was and He will be."

This song and the attachment to God have been implanted in the Jewish soul forever. But until the Exodus from Egypt, we were not able to call it forth. Only after this was the longing [for God] revealed. Of this, Scripture says: "Our soul has escaped like a bird out of the hunters' trap" (Ps. 124:7). In Egypt our very desire was imprisoned. "Release my soul from prison, so that I may give thanks to Your name" (Ps. 142:8).

So it is on every Sabbath that soul and desire are set free. That is why Shabbat is "in memory of the Exodus from Egypt." And we say: "It is good to give thanks to the Lord" (Ps. 92:2) in the song for the Sabbath day.

“ . . . that they turn back and encamp  
before Pi Hahiroth . . . ” (Shemot, 14:2)

On the matter of the impurity of this form of idolatry, which is the  
particular idol in the desert was in the form of a male and female.<sup>17</sup>  
Therefore its name was *Pi Hahiroth*,<sup>18</sup> for the nations suppose that free-  
dom means that they can extend themselves and perform all the de-  
sires of their heart. On this Pharaoh said, “they are confounded in  
the land,” meaning that when they reach this form of idolatry it will  
seem (to them) that they are enslaved (and confounded by this) since  
they (make such efforts to) fence themselves off from physical desire.  
Yet actually the opposite is true, for they the nations are enslaved  
to this, for since their own hearts are not in their possession (or in  
their control) such that their intellect should rule over them. Yet rather,  
their desires rule over them, and there is no enslavement greater than  
this.

shell, evil -  
spread their wings -  
(delete) -  
replace with) have so -

- be dissatisfied and frustrated ...but it is still better to be free than to be a slave.  
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- Shabat - A time of freedom from physicality when we can connect to the soul's natural craving for God. Now this may engender melancholy but that is not bad. It is good, being as it is a recognition of our spiritual nature and potential. This may be the explanation of the pensive mood of seudah shlishit.

Mei haShiloach, volume one, page 73, opening phrase וישבו ויחזנו